Desert Temple – Shift Sands

System: Dungeons & Dragons 4e
Party: 4-6 players
Level: 1

A long day out from the main town in the heat of the desert lands, you and your group are travelling along on the back of a gigantic lizard. As you look ahead, you see strange bumps in the sands—flowing across the sands as if it were water. At first glance, they seemed like sand sharks, but then scorpion tails surface and glide amongst the sand—circling about the lizard's feet. A larger bump comes careening towards you, and a huge scorpion jumps out from underneath the red hot sands and surprises the lizard—forcing you all off of it and onto the sands below.

Combat Encounter

In a moment's notice, the scorpions have you all surrounded. You instantly notice a few large rocks and attempt to take shelter on top of them. The large mother scorpion guides the smaller children to attack first.

Monster Tactics: The smaller children attempt to deal as much damage to a single, weaker target for the mother to finish off towards the end. Some of the small scorpions can burrow underground and resurface—throwing up motes of sand in the player's view and knocking them prone.

Skill Challenge Encounter

After the battle has gone on for some time, the giant rock which the other would take shelter on (*if the large mother is still alive*), the mother punches a gaping hole into the would-be rock, which turns out to be a gargantuan Ancient Dune Scorpion. The larger one snatches the mother and crushes it under its claw "***WHO DARES DISTURB THE MIGHTY AND POWERFUL VRALLIK, LORD OF THE SANDS?***"

After the mother dies, it is up to the players to make it back onto the dune lizard to continue their deep desert exploration in 2-3 rounds after the Ancient Dune Scorpion's appearance. Other, smaller scorpions will try to either:
1) Subdue or kill the players, or;
2) Force the Dune Lizard to give up and block its way out.

If the scorpions block the lizard's escape, the campaign may end there, unless the players can talk their way out of the already sticky situation with the Lord of the Sands.

Skills to be used:
Acrobatics: To negate a scorpion's attack if a character passes over a threatened square.
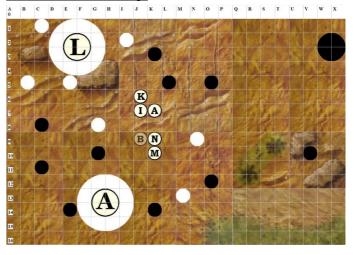*Athletics*: To climb up the ladder to the top of the dune lizard. Two checks are necessary to climb the full length of the ladder.
Bluff: Use after making a successful Insight Check. Deny an opportunity attack granted by a burrowing scorpion.
Endurance: Increase your base speed by 1 this and take a -1 penalty to all defenses this turn.
Insight: Use this to locate the nearest buried dune scorpions to use a bluff check to deny their attacks.

None of the sills used counts towards number of successes/ failures, since this skill challenge is a Timed Challenge.

Encounter Map

Key:
- The Gargantuan icon with the L in the center is the Dune Lizard, and the D next to it is the driver, *<Insert name here>*.
- The players can be set anywhere around the Dune Lizard, but the scorpions must also be placed near the players as well.
- Blank markers represent burrowing dune lizards – white marks represent scorpions close to the surface (*threatening squares provoking OA's if players move over them*), while black marks represent scorpions burrowing deep underground (*non- threatening squares*).

End note:
Map is made by PyMapper with the Desert of Athas tileset

Encounter and map produced by **Zack Buntin** (*Xeadin*)

Author Notes:
This encounter is currently being used here, in the Wizards Community.